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**An investigation into the complex process of facilitating effective  
professional learning: CPD tutors' practices under the microscope**

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## Abstract

18 **Background.** Research evidence on what makes CPD effective is accumulating. Yet,  
19 fundamental questions about the specific CPD features that lead to programme success  
20 remain. Furthermore, very little research investigates the nature and quality of CPD  
21 providers' (tutors) practices. Taking a closer look at the 'pedagogy of facilitation'  
22 (Poekert, 2011) is therefore an important direction for research in order to offer specific  
23 guidance on how to design and deliver future CPD programmes for maximum impact.

24 **Purpose.** The present study aimed to advance this line of inquiry by seeking to examine  
25 tutors' perceptions and practices in the context of a short course on Inclusive Physical  
26 Education (IPE). Two research questions were addressed: 1) What were the tutors'  
27 *perceptions* of effective CPD delivery? And 2) How were these interpretations *evidenced*  
28 in practice? The short course, delivered by 40 different tutors across the country, was  
29 part of a National CPD programme which reached and educated over 5000 school staff  
30 in England. The scale of this Programme offered an ideal setting in which to address the  
31 research questions.

32 **Participants and setting.** A case study design was adopted where the case was  
33 identified at the level of individual courses. A cluster sampling procedure was adopted  
34 (one cluster for each of the nine geographical areas in England). Where possible,  
35 systematic sampling within the nine clusters was employed (i.e. collect evidence from the  
36 first two courses delivered in each cluster each year). A total of 27 courses, delivered by

20 tutors across eight geographical areas in England were selected as cases and all tutors involved in their delivery were invited to participate in the study.

**Data collection.** To explore tutors' perceptions of effective CPD delivery (research question 1), qualitative data were collected via an online questionnaire and individual interviews. To examine how these interpretations were *evidenced* in practice (research question 2), both quantitative and qualitative data were collected via systematic observations and ethnographic field notes.

**Data analysis.** Qualitative data were analysed using a constructivist approach to grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Data from the observations was entered into SPSS version 21 (IBM Statistics) for analysis.

**Findings.** Findings suggest that tutors' perceptions and beliefs did not always materialize. Data from the observations suggest variation in the ways tutors structured, supported, and facilitated professional learning. This variation was evident not only in the actual time dedicated to practical vs. theoretical activities and active vs. passive learning opportunities but also in tutors' ability to facilitate professional learning. This finding suggests that there is a significant set of skills involved in supporting, nurturing, and challenging professional learning in CPD contexts. It is therefore important to consider how tutors can be best supported to develop and implement these skills effectively.

**Conclusion.** The results consolidate existing understandings about the importance of (inter)active and practical learning opportunities in CPD; but also add nuance and detail on the diverse ways in which tutors engaged participants in the learning process.

Findings draw our attention to the important issue of the selection and continuing education of CPD tutors.

## **Keywords**

Continuing Professional Development, Short Courses, Tutors' practices, Systematic observations, Effective facilitation / facilitators.

## **Introduction**

The idea that carefully designed Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes help to raise standards of teaching and learning in schools is widely accepted (Higgins, Cordingley, Greany and Coe, 2016). Although research on what makes CPD effective is accumulating, the evidence base is mixed and inconclusive (Goodyear, 2016). Different CPD forms are rarely compared to yield firm conclusions about cost effective forms of provision (Wayne, Suk Yoon, Zhu, Cronen and Garet, 2008). Equally, evaluations of individual CPD initiatives often do not 'tease apart' the specific features that lead to programme success (Hill, Beisiegel and Jacob, 2013), whether success is measured against teacher (e.g., improved practice) and/or pupil learning outcomes. Further robust research is thus needed to answer some of the most pressing questions about effective CPD.

When external or internal CPD providers are involved (herein also referred to as 'providers', 'tutors' or 'facilitators' interchangeably), they are expected to play a central role (Patton et al., 2012). If what providers do during the CPD is indeed a critical factor determining CPD effectiveness, it is important for research to begin to unpack the

79 complex, multiple and varied ways they support teachers to learn. Once providers'  
80 practices are better understood, then questions about the different forms of support (i.e.,  
81 features of great tutoring) that are most likely to enable teachers to further enhance their  
82 practices can be answered. Taking a closer look at the 'pedagogy of facilitation' (Poekert,  
83 2011) is therefore an important direction for research in order to offer specific guidance  
84 on how to design and deliver future CPD programmes for maximum impact.

85         The few studies that have started looking at the pedagogy of facilitation examine  
86 tutors' thinking and decision making (Fevre and Richardson, 2002), offer insights on the  
87 challenges and dilemmas encountered (Poekert, 2011), explore tutors' perceptions of  
88 effective CPD facilitation (Patton and Parker, 2014), and compare tutors' and CPD  
89 participants' views on the effectiveness of the CPD strategies employed (Patton, Parker  
90 and Pratt, 2013). This body of literature expands understandings about the range of CPD  
91 strategies *reported* to be employed and *perceived* to be effective. However, although  
92 significant insights on what works in specific contexts are offered, this evidence is  
93 grounded in self-reports and individual evaluations of events. Researchers cannot thus  
94 be certain about what learning activities took place, how providers supported professional  
95 learning, and what features of their practices were effective.

96         Existing research has also primarily examined the experiences and perspectives  
97 of facilitators involved in long-term, sustained CPD programmes (e.g., Patton et al., 2013)  
98 but little is known about the practices that are effective and feasible in CPD opportunities  
99 of shorter duration. In this context, a more nuanced understanding of not only CPD  
100 providers' perceptions (what they say they do) but also the ways they structure and  
101 support professional learning (what they actually do) in *various* CPD contexts is required.

Understanding the varied ways tutors support professional learning is an important starting point before trying to assess the impact of their practices on teacher (or student) outcomes.

## Study Purpose

The present study aimed to advance this line of inquiry by seeking to examine tutors' perceptions and practices in the context of a national CPD Programme on Inclusive Physical Education (IPE), delivered in the form of a short, day-long course. Two research questions were addressed: 1) What were the tutors' *perceptions* of effective CPD delivery? And 2) How were these interpretations *evidenced* in practice? In order to answer the second question, it was necessary to develop and validate a new systematic observation tool that allowed for the delineation and identification of tutors' practices in a way that has not been attempted previously.

From inception through to September 2016, the Programme evaluated, reached and educated over 5000 school staff in England. Relying on a large number of tutors implementing courses with diverse participants, the scale of this Programme offered an ideal setting in which to address the research questions. The research reported in this paper was part of a larger, mixed method independent evaluation study, funded by the Youth Sport Trust<sup>1</sup>, which had two broad objectives: (i) to measure the impact of the Programme; and (ii) to examine the quality of CPD implementation in order to provide evidence based recommendations to improve future activities. The present paper is concerned with the second objective and the methods outlined are those that were

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<sup>1</sup> Charity in England seeking to support and improve the provision of physical education and school sport (<https://www.youthsporttrust.org/>)

adopted to answer research questions about *CPD processes* and the quality of implementation.

### **Effective professional learning: The role of the provider**

In both policy (Department of Education, DoE, 2016) and research (Higgins et al., 2016), the value of professional development that is sustained, collaborative and *in situ* is increasingly recognised. However, teachers rarely have the resources (e.g., time, funding) to pursue the kind of prolonged and intensive professional learning that research suggests has a substantial impact on student learning (Cordingley, Higgins, Greany, Buckler, et al., 2015). The workplace learning literature also highlights the importance of regular access to external expertise in various contexts, as external partners can stimulate new thinking and offer challenge and support to practitioners to improve their practices (Stoll, Harris and Handscomb, 2012).

Whilst accessing external expertise is undoubtedly a necessary component of CPD, one-shot opportunities have been criticised for failing to support meaningful and deep level change (Higgins et al., 2016). Critics' concerns revolve around the 'artificial separation' of knowledge from practice (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung, 2007); and the passive transmission of intellectually superficial content to large groups of teachers without careful consideration of individual contexts and diverse professional learning needs (Armour and Makopoulou, 2012; Patton et al., 2012). A deficit approach is also frequently reportedly adopted, as effective CPD appears to be primarily about the success of information-giving activities (Armour, Quennerstedt, Chambers and Makopoulou, 2017).



Despite these concerns, recent studies have found that well designed short courses can bring positive participant outcomes (Lauer, Christopher, Pirpo-Triplett et al., 2014) and have a ‘considerable and lasting impact on teaching and learning’ (Cordingley et al., 2015, p. 15). It is also apparent that the quality of provision can vary significantly within and across programmes (DfE 2016; Higgins et al 2016). Therefore, it is erroneous to assume that all courses are ineffective by default. Ensuring ‘adequate’ or sufficient time for CPD participation does not, on its own, guarantee success. What matters is how the time is used and the extent to which the CPD experience enables teachers to refine ideas, embed approaches and change their practices in ways that benefit pupils (DfE, 2016).

How teachers engage in the learning process, and more specifically the opportunities they have for active engagement, is a critical programme design feature (Desimore, 2009). Participant-centered CPD (Patton et al., 2012) reflects a constructivist perspective on learning which suggests that learning is neither linear nor straightforward; it rather involves a process of knowledge construction, reconstruction and remaking (Dewey, 1938) and is more likely to occur as a result of meaningful engagement with material and activities (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD, 2007). The implications for CPD are clear. Professional learning is maximised when teachers are treated as knowledge creating professionals rather than passive recipients of ‘simplistic formulas or cookie-cutter routines’ (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 5).

Contemporary theories of learning (i.e. social constructivism, situated learning) also encourage teachers to access others’ ‘practical wisdom’ (Shulman, 2007) and

diverse approaches. Although difficult to monitor and accredit and certainly not a panacea, research shows that when certain conditions are in place, collaborative learning is valued by teachers and can have an impact on their practices (Stoll et al., 2012). Professional learning is also perceived to be effective when professionals have opportunities to construct knowledge through the mediation of a facilitating agent (i.e. tutor; Day, 2015). The notion of social scaffolding (Bruner, 1983) is particularly relevant in the context of this study. To maximise professional learning, it is argued, tutors need to not only provide high quality, innovative and challenging content but also be effective facilitators by creating the right social infrastructures (Wenger, 1998) that support learning in effective ways. What the facilitation process involves can however be interpreted differently by different tutors.

Research suggests that one fundamental aspect of effective facilitation involves helping teachers to ground new ideas into existing practices (Patton et al., 2012). Experienced PE-CPD facilitators argue that understanding teachers' contexts, listening to their voices (by creating a safe environment where teachers can voice their thoughts), and making teachers feel valued so that they have the confidence to engage in the process fully is paramount (Patton et al., 2012). Given the diversity of teachers' learning needs and contexts, conscious efforts to diversify the CPD content to make it relevant to its participants should thus be evident in CPD programmes (Higgins et al., 2016). In this context, the need for a personalised and tailored approach to teachers' CPD is widely acknowledged (Louws, Meirik, van Veen and van Driel, 2017).

Another important element of effective facilitation is for tutors to not only 'provide structure without dictating' (Patton et al., 2013, p.34) but also support, challenge and

191 'push' (Poekert, 2011) teachers to transcend established (and sometimes outdated)  
192 understandings and practices. Researchers suggest that tutors need to act as  
193 independent honest brokers (Whitehouse, 2011), to offer teachers opportunities to  
194 explore alternative modes of teaching (Kennedy, 2016) in meaningful contexts (Hunuk,  
195 2017) and to create opportunities for discussion that are both affirmative and  
196 contradictory in order to introduce 'disequilibrium' (Patton et al., 2012, 530).

197 Experienced PE-CPD tutors acknowledge the importance of problematizing  
198 aspects of teachers' practice through critical analysis; and argue that when such  
199 interactions are in place, teachers can experience 'real and 'deep level' changes (Patton  
200 and Parker, 2014). Poekert (2011) however also cautions that although tutors are  
201 generally effective at providing resources and advice, engaging teachers in self-reflection  
202 and critical analysis is a much more challenging task. Achieving the right balance  
203 between *leading* (i.e. providing expert input, resources), *listening* (i.e. understanding  
204 teachers' contexts and learning needs) and *challenging* teachers is considered one of the  
205 great complexities of tutoring (Higgins et al 2016).

206 In summary, whilst in educational research the quality of teaching appears to be  
207 'the single biggest factor determining pupil learning outcomes' (Pianta and Hamre, 2009,  
208 p. 1), tutors' practices (i.e., the ways they support or facilitate effective professional  
209 learning) are rarely examined in a detailed and systematic way. Research that seeks to  
210 examine tutors' practices is therefore an important step in developing a more nuanced  
211 understanding of aspects of programme delivery that support meaningful and impactful  
212 professional learning. Yet, examining specific tutoring practices in the context of  
213 evaluation poses a number of challenges as no established, valid and reliable measures

have been reported in the literature. This necessitated the development of an innovative methodological approach and this is explained and justified in the next section.

## Methods

### The context

Launched in 2013, the CPD Programme aimed to increase the competence and confidence of primary, secondary, and trainee teachers (as well as other adults involved in the education of children) to deliver high quality Inclusive Physical Education (IPE). The Programme was delivered in the form of a one-off, six-hour course. The ‘inclusion spectrum<sup>2</sup>’, developed by Black and Stevenson (Stevenson, 2009) in the UK, provided the theoretical framework (or ‘theory of instruction’, Wayne et al., 2008) for the programme.

The content and structure of the courses were designed and reviewed centrally by experts on inclusion. The delivery was the responsibility of approximately 40 tutors consisting mainly of PE teachers working in secondary or special schools with tutoring experience, or independent consultants. Tutors were invited to participate in ‘tutor development days’ approximately twice a year, during which course material was presented, explained and debated, practical sessions to illustrate examples of effective course implementation were included, and issues of concern were discussed.

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<sup>2</sup>The main principle of the Inclusion Spectrum is that all students can be included and challenged to progress in their learning when teachers design the learning environment by including ‘open’ (i.e. all learners participate in activities that do not emphasise individual differences), ‘modified’ (i.e. provide differentiated instruction using the STEP tool), ‘parallel’ (i.e. ability groups) or ‘separate’ (i.e. temporary interventions aligned with the learning objectives of the lesson) activities – or through a process called ‘reverse integration’ where all pupils participate in disability sport (Stevenson, 2009).

Although variability in delivery was anticipated, detailed course material for tutors was made available to ensure that the key deliverables were implemented adequately by different tutors. Contemporary approaches to CPD design were apparent in the philosophy of the programme in various ways. For example, tutors were expected to facilitate discussions about theoretical and practical issues, provide hands-on and innovative practical activities to explore effective IPE into practice, support participants to develop effective inclusive pedagogies by having opportunities to ‘design and modify’ activities in practical settings, foster sharing of expertise, and engage participants in ‘action planning’ through reflection. Overall, there was a clear emphasis on practical and interactive professional learning experiences and this shaped the content and purpose of the data collection tools employed in the evaluation research.

### **Research design and sampling**

A case study design (Thomas and Myers, 2015) was adopted where the case was identified at the level of individual courses. To capture the anticipated variation in programme implementation, and given the ad hoc nature of course advertising and delivery, a cluster sampling procedure was considered the most appropriate and applicable method. Each of the nine geographical areas in England was identified as a cluster (nine clusters in total). Where possible, systematic sampling within the nine clusters was employed with the aim to collect evidence from the first two courses delivered in each cluster each year. However, this was not always possible in practice due to tutor response and availability.

Between October 2013 and September 2015, a total of 27 courses, delivered by 20 tutors across eight<sup>3</sup> geographical areas were observed in their entirety (all six hours). 17 tutors were observed only once whilst 1 and 2 tutors were observed 4 and 3 times each respectively. From this sample, and at the start of each course, all course participants (n= 450, with an average of 20 participants per course) as well as the course tutors were invited to participate in the study. Although course participants engaged in a range of research activities, the purpose and focus of the present paper is on tutors' perceptions and practices.

## **Data collection tools**

To explore tutors' perceptions of effective CPD delivery (research question 1), qualitative data were collected via an online questionnaire and individual interviews. To develop a realistic and contextual understanding of how these interpretations were *evidenced* in practice (research question 2), both quantitative and qualitative data were collected via systematic observations and ethnographic field notes.

### *Tutor questionnaire*

All tutors involved in the delivery of the programme (n=40) were invited to complete an anonymous online questionnaire at the end of the second year of the evaluation (May 2015). The questionnaire consisted of two open-ended questions asking tutors to provide details on the features of their practices that they believed were effective (i.e. supported

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<sup>3</sup> Courses from eight rather than all nine geographic areas in England were observed as, during the timeframe of the research, only a limited number of courses were delivered in one area and observations were not possible due to lack of tutor response.

272 meaningful professional learning with the aim to improve pupils' PE experiences).  
273 Eighteen tutors (45% response rate) provided full responses.

#### 274 *Tutor interviews*

275 Each tutor delivering the courses observed (n=20) was invited to and participated in one  
276 face-to-face, individual interview that was in most cases conducted informally as the  
277 situation allowed (e.g., taking place during breaks or at the end of the courses observed).  
278 The aims of these interviews were to explore tutors' views about the features of effective  
279 CPD, discuss their reasoning about the strategies they employed during the course of the  
280 day, understand some of the challenges they encountered, and to determine how they  
281 could be best supported to deliver a high quality CPD experience. The duration of the  
282 interviews with each tutor ranged from 10 to 30 minutes and they were conducted by the  
283 author, who in most cases made extensive notes of tutors' comments/responses as  
284 audio recording the discussions was not a possible option (e.g., noisy environment, tutors  
285 on the move).

#### 286 *Systematic course observations and ethnographic field notes*

287 Observation is an established research tool in both qualitative and quantitative research.  
288 Used well, it has the potential to enable researchers to 'get close to' and develop in-depth  
289 understandings of social practices studied (Ohman and Quennerstedt, 2012). While there  
290 is little research regarding the use of systematic observation in teachers' CPD settings,  
291 there is a long and rich history of systematic observation in education and physical  
292 education (Grossman, Loeb, Cohen and Whychoff, 2013; Pianta and Hamre, 2009). In

293 this evaluation, the work of McKenzie (2012) was drawn upon in order to develop an  
294 observation tool, called the Observation of Tutors' Practices (or OTP)<sup>4</sup>.

295 Observations can focus on a range of domains but should be carried out with  
296 consideration as to what is feasible given the available resources (Schoenfeld, 2014). In  
297 the context of this study, decisions on the specific domains to be included were grounded  
298 in a careful analysis of the programme aims and philosophy. More specifically, particular  
299 emphasis was placed on how tutors supported participants to engage in 'active  
300 professional learning', offered opportunities for practical application, facilitated tasks and  
301 interactions, and tailored provision. The observation tool provided space for two types of  
302 data to be collected simultaneously: systematic coding of pedagogical practices and  
303 ethnographic field notes regarding the nature of those practices.

304 The first type of data collected involved a detailed coding system which was  
305 developed to record systematically (for every one minute interval) tutors' pedagogical  
306 practices in terms of the *time* allocated to 'active' or 'passive' opportunities as well as the  
307 division between theory and practice. A partial-internal recording (Subramaniam &  
308 Wuest, 2017) was adopted; i.e., coding the tutor behaviour that dominated the first thirty  
309 seconds of each minute, giving the observer time to code and collect other relevant data  
310 (field notes) about the events during the second half of the minute interval.

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<sup>4</sup> A copy of the systematic observation tool and questions that guided the collection of qualitative field notes can be obtained from the author upon request.



The domain of 'active' engagement included tutors setting tasks that enabled participants to: (i) engage in discussions about an issue/concept (e.g., the features of learners who make progress in PE); (ii) reflect upon theoretical or practical ideas and elaborate on how these can be used in different contexts; (iii) design, modify, and apply different inclusive activities in small groups; (iv) explain the activities they created verbally or through demonstrations; (v) teach the activities they created to other participants or pupils; and (vi) provide a clear rationale for the perceived effectiveness of their modified activities.

The domain of 'passive engagement' was intended to focus on those occasions when tutors delivered material in relation to the theory of instruction (e.g., present the inclusion spectrum and explain its components); offered examples or led practical activities to illustrate the practical application of the model or discuss other effective inclusive practices; or set equipment and tasks. The extent to which tutors offered practical opportunities, and the content and purpose of these opportunities were also captured. For example, different codes were noted when tutors set up equipment and explained a range of progression tasks while participants were watching a demonstration as opposed to tutors allocating time for participants to experience vicariously the activity.

The second type of data collected involved taking detailed open-ended field notes on the nature and quality of tasks set by the tutors and their ability to facilitate participant engagement. Informed by theory and research on effective CPD, and guided by a set of questions, the observer examined and monitored the ways in (and extent to) which tutors tailored provision, facilitated discussions, probed participants' thinking and made effective use of questioning and feedback. As an illustration, examples of guiding questions in

relation to 'tailoring provision' included: Did tutors check whether participants were familiar with material presented? Did tutors ask about existing IPE practices (what works – or not – and why)? Did tutors check participants' existing knowledge and did they use this information to shape the content of the course? Did tutors support participants to explore ways to implement new ideas into their PE lessons?

### **Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of the qualitative data was established by data triangulation and member reflections (Smith and McGannon, 2017). The collection of evidence using multiple data collection tools ensured that data triangulation was possible; and results are reported accordingly.

Member reflections were possible both during and following the end of each tutor interview. During the interviewing process, tutors were probed to elaborate further on the issues discussed and sought clarification when required in order to collect rich, detailed and accurate data. At the end of each interview, a summary containing key points from the interview was created by the researcher and discussed in length with the tutors in order to ensure that the researcher's interpretations reflected tutors' perspectives and to, generate additional data (if something was omitted or not extensively discussed previously). The trustworthiness of the results from the field notes was ensured by randomly selecting tutors observed (n=4), developing a course report including a summary of the key points identified, sharing the report with the selected tutors and engaging in discussions with them about their views on the key themes reported.

### **Validity and reliability**

The systematic observation tool was developed through an extensive partnership-based process between the author and programme designers<sup>5</sup>. Although the results reported in this paper derive from observations conducted by the author, the initial reliability of the observation tool was also tested. Two research associates observed two separate courses each, alongside the lead researcher (author). Pearson's correlations and t-tests were conducted to examine the relationships and mean differences between the ratings made by the lead researcher and the two research associates. The results revealed the ratings made by the different observers to be strongly positively correlated ( $r=.0.74$ ) and to reflect a good degree of inter-observer reliability (M ICC = 0.93 and 0.91).

To test the observation tool's convergent validity, results in relation to the percentage of time allocated to active and passive learning were compared to course participants' responses to the end-of-course questionnaire. All participants attending the courses observed completed two items pertaining to their opportunities for active learning at the end of each course<sup>6</sup>. Pearson correlation analyses showed that there were significant positive correlations between the data from the observations (percentage of time allocated to active learning) and the participants' perceptions of the opportunities to put ideas forward (construct knowledge) ( $r = .19, p = .005$ ) and opportunities to share knowledge ( $r = .26, p < .001$ ).

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<sup>5</sup> Initial codes were developed by the author following the observation of four separate courses, which provided a sharper understanding of the diversity of tutor practices. These codes were then piloted during four additional courses. The final codes were reviewed by programme designers to ensure clarity and alignment with programme expectations.

<sup>6</sup> In this course, I had opportunities to 'put ideas forward' and 'share knowledge and ideas with other participants and/or the tutor'. Participants responded to these statements on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all in agreement*) to 7 (*completely in agreement*).

## Data analysis

Qualitative data were analysed using elements of grounded theory (Charmaz 2006). The process of data analysis was *ongoing; iterative* (to enable further data collection when required) and *theoretically sensitive* as the researcher acknowledged entering the fieldwork 'cognisant of sensitive concepts that provided a point of departure for data collection' and analysis (Weed, 2017, p. 152).

Once data were available, the researcher engaged in initial coding - an incident-by-incident analysis seeking to describe phenomena and attach names or labels to data extracts. This was supported by memo writing (i.e. initial interpretations of evidence) (Charmaz, 2006) and constant comparisons between codes to decide which belonged together (Harry, Sturges, and Kllinger, 2005). The process was *theoretically sensitive* as codes were developed and compared not just with other codes but also with theory and research to ensure that the results remained grounded (Weed, 2017).

As a result of the constant comparison, categories were developed. For example, codes revolving around the notion of learning with and from other participants (e.g., "share ideas with others in similar positions", "debate teaching approaches", "discuss barriers", "explore realistic ways to include pupils") were grouped under the category of "The importance of interactions". Different categories (e.g., "The importance of interactions"; "Opportunities to construct knowledge") were then clustered together under the relevant themes (e.g., "Engaging participants in 'active' learning").

The quantitative data from the observations were entered into SPSS version 21 (IBM Statistics) for analysis. Separate percentages were created for the amount of time

dedicated to theory vs. practice as well as active vs. passive learning. Descriptive statistics were conducted to identify mean scores per course. As reported earlier, Pearson's correlation and t-tests were conducted to test the observation tool's convergent validity and intra-reliability.

## Results

Tutors appeared to share some fundamental assumptions about effective CPD implementation, including the importance of affording opportunities for practical experiences (theme 1), tailoring provision (theme 2) and engaging participants in (inter)active learning (theme 3). Course observations however showed a degree of variation in the ways different tutors offered such opportunities and facilitated professional learning (theme 4). In the following section, field notes from observations and quotes from the tutor questionnaire and interviews are identified with the initial capitals (Course – C, Tutor Questionnaire – TQ and Interview - Int) while each tutor or course has been given a unique numerical code (e.g., TQ-4, Int-4, C-4).

### Offering opportunities for practical engagement

When interviewed, all tutors believed that offering practical experiences was one of the most important components of effective delivery. There was consensus that professionals learn by doing and that opportunities for '*hands-on*' experiences were pivotal in supporting participants to develop a '*good understanding*' (TQ-9) of effective IPE and to be '*confident to begin the process of change within their own delivery*' (TQ-14). Evidence from course observations showed that all tutors led practical sessions aimed at enhancing participants' understanding of the application of the inclusion

spectrum, through demonstrations and explanations on how this can be applied in practice. In most cases, these were tutor-led, vicarious experiences with participants engaging in tasks as learners.

Aligned with the course material, most tutors (with the exception of courses 5, 14 and 26) also encouraged participants to design and modify practical activities using some of the key principles of IPE introduced earlier in the course. Some tutors believed that the practical dimension was strengthened when participants had opportunities to work with and teach '*real pupils*' (C-11) because it is a '*memorable*' experience that '*gives staff confidence to include all*' (TQ-2). They, however, acknowledged that this was not always feasible.

Despite consensus about the importance of practical opportunities, course observations identified variation in the percentage of time dedicated to theoretical input and opportunities for practical application. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of the theory/practice divide per course. In 55% of the courses observed, tutors dedicated more time to theory/discussion than practical application. In four of these courses (9, 14, 15 and 16), only 30% of the duration of the course was practical. This finding suggests that tutors made alterations to the suggested course structure with some offering fewer opportunities for practical application than anticipated by programme designers. For example, two tutors (C-9 and C-15) encouraged participants to design activities in a non-practical setting (roundtables) with neither access to equipment nor opportunities to demonstrate and analyse the activities they had created / modified.

Evidence from field notes suggest that tutors' practices also varied in the ways and extent to which they explained, justified and theorised the tasks they led. More specifically, in most of the tutor-led practical sessions, there was a clear emphasis on the 'how' and 'what' of the activity. All tutors shared the rationale of the activity demonstrated and encouraged participants to consider the links between the inclusion spectrum and the activity at hand in order to develop a more in-depth understanding of its practical application. However, only a small number (n=4) encouraged participants to examine the activities presented in a critical and reflective way (e.g., 'Would such an approach be relevant to my pupils, how, and why?' 'Who would benefit if this approach was adopted, and why?' or 'In what ways does this approach deviate from what I currently offer?' 'Can I implement this activity with my learners or not and why? What do I need to change to make it feasible in my school context?'). This finding suggests that most tutors missed opportunities to tailor provision and this is an issue expanded upon in the next section.

## **Tailoring provision**

Some tutors argued that effective CPD is evident when participants '*complete [the course] with their questions answered*' (TQ-21). They talked about the importance of '*listening to them [participants] and valuing their experience*' (TQ-3); '*identifying what participants' starting points are, just as we would with a class and try to move everybody in some way*' (TQ-7); and '*using open questions to bring out their understanding*' (TQ-15). Identifying participants' needs prior to workshop implementation (TQ-3) or through targeted questions at the beginning of the workshop was crucial to these tutors in order to understand what participants were '*hoping to learn*' (TQ-2) and consequently enable

461 them to make appropriate adaptations to the content of the workshop '*to tailor [provision]*  
462 *to the needs of participants*' (TQ-4).

463 A few tutors (n=5) however were not convinced that tailoring provision to this  
464 degree and for every participant was possible because of the nature and duration of the  
465 course (TQ-14). Limited time was reported to be the main barrier. One tutor strongly  
466 believed that the only way to overcome this was to offer '*a different type of CPD*  
467 *experience*', with the provision of a '*longer summer workshop and regular meetings*  
468 *throughout the year*' (Int-6).

469 Other tutors (n=8) meanwhile believed that tailoring provision, one of the most  
470 important albeit challenging aspects of their delivery (Int-4), was possible if sufficient time  
471 for relevant tasks was '*built-in*' the course material (TQ-12) and clear guidance was  
472 offered on how much time to dedicate on this. As one tutor explained, '*there should be*  
473 *dedicated time on the course for discussion. Barriers [to inclusion] are inputted on one of*  
474 *the tasks but we are advised not to dwell*' (TQ-18). To be better prepared to respond to  
475 participants' questions effectively, one tutor recommended that they should have  
476 opportunities to share experiences by '*discuss[ing] questions which arise*' (TQ-12) during  
477 tutor development days.

478 Despite their good intentions, evidence from field notes suggested that most tutors  
479 made limited (if any) meaningful connections between the CPD experience and  
480 participants' existing practices. In most cases, tutors (with the exception of two) allowed  
481 insufficient opportunity for participants to talk about their existing practices at the start of  
482 the course; to provide examples of what they perceived to be high quality IPE in the



context of their school; or to discuss the pedagogical challenges encountered. Most discussions revolved around external barriers to inclusion (e.g., worrying parents, Teaching Assistants who take over pupils' learning, lack of resources and facilities) but little attention was given to pedagogical considerations in relation to inclusive teaching and learning. There was also little evidence of in-depth analysis of existing effective or ineffective practices, meaningful discussions on how these related to the model presented in the course (as explained at the end of the previous section), or sharing of ideas on ways to overcome real or perceived barriers to embed new knowledge in practice<sup>7</sup>.

Although some tutors claimed that they made conscious efforts to identify participants' questions and to adapt the content of the course based on these needs, there was little evidence of pedagogical differentiation to ensure that participants with different roles, responsibilities, knowledge, attitudes, and needs or priorities experienced a more personalised CPD. Only one out of the three tutors who were observed more than once showed a degree of content diversification and 'on the spot' adaptation based on the background, questions or needs of the participants. In the case of the other two tutors, both the content and delivery mode of the different courses varied very little – if at all. For example, courses 6, 14 and 26 were delivered by the same tutor and had identical content and tasks. This suggests a degree of pre-specification and

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<sup>7</sup> In C3, for example, participants sought the tutor's advice about feasible ways to include elements of the inclusion spectrum in their contexts especially in relation different activity areas (e.g., dance, gymnastics, games) or when the conditions were challenging (e.g., 'very busy class' with some 'very naughty children'). However, the tutor offered very brief responses stressing the importance of effective planning without further investigation of existing practices, specific school cultures or barriers teachers or learners encountered.

standardisation of the IPE course. It could be therefore argued that overall, and despite their intentions and beliefs, most tutors missed opportunities to offer tailored support.

### **Engaging participants in 'active' learning**

Evidence from tutor interviews and questionnaires suggested that there was an embedded, and to some extent, shared understanding that participants need opportunities to engage actively in learning and to share knowledge and experiences, in order to have '*some ownership of the day*' (TQ-6).

Some tutors believed that the development of professional practice should come from the participants themselves. Despite their extensive experience working with pupils with diverse and complex needs, they did not consider themselves as the experts who should merely transmit knowledge. They believed that participants have a '*wealth of experience*' (Int-1) and a workable understanding of their learners and practices (Int-7), and this experience needed to be shared in order to maximise learning for all involved. As one tutor put it, '*By sharing challenges and ideas with colleagues in similar positions they will gain more realistic and practical ways to include pupils*' (TQ-14). Establishing a '*relaxed atmosphere*' (Int-10) where people '*move around, interact with others*' (Int-4) and feel '*safe to talk, share their views*' (Int-8) and '*try out different ideas*' (TQ-8) was considered important.

In contrast, a small number of tutors (n=5) described their role as pivotal in providing (delivering) feasible and innovative ideas, including '*practical examples and suggestions*' for '*participants to take away*' and use in their own contexts (TQ-6). In some cases, tutors were concerned that their tutoring style would result in a less engaging and

524 interactive course than desired, planned and anticipated. For example, tutors admitted to  
525 the habit of *'talking too much instead of taking a step back'* (Int-4) or feeling under  
526 pressure to *'give as much information to participants'* as possible in the short space of  
527 time available (Int-14).

528         Some tutors (n=4) however believed that their approach to course delivery was not  
529 fixed but dependent on who the participants were and what kinds of support they needed.  
530 When participants demonstrated limited subject knowledge (as it was expected when  
531 working with primary staff, Int-5) or lacked confidence in teaching PE (Int-9), some tutors  
532 believed that a more direct approach in their delivery was preferred.

533         Evidence from course observations identified significant variation in CPD  
534 implementation. The means for active and passive learning, as captured by the  
535 systematic observations, indicated that in general tutors offered more 'passive' than  
536 'active' learning opportunities. A breakdown of the percentage of active/passive divide  
537 per course is reported in table 1, showing that although a few tutors (1%) achieved a  
538 balance between the two (50/50), in the majority of courses observed (74%), tutors' input  
539 appeared to dominate the experience. This was particularly the case for three courses (5,  
540 6, 14 and 26). On the other hand, the tutors in courses 11, 20, 21 and 22 offered  
541 substantially more and different opportunities for active engagement, including  
542 collaborative lesson planning and co-teaching of PE classes. In these instances,  
543 participants were encouraged to be actively engaged and to contribute to the workshop  
544 experience for more than 60% of the duration of each course.

Different tutors also seemed to value (and afford) different professional learning activities. For example, some tutors (n=14) encouraged whole group discussion and sharing of ideas following group tasks, whilst others (n=6) did not appear to incorporate such activities in their delivery. In those cases, tutors missed opportunities to engage participants in pedagogical discussions and to share insights generated widely. Furthermore, although some tutors provided opportunities for participants to 'try out' their ideas by teaching children (n=2) or, more frequently, other participants (n=4), this pedagogical approach was not embedded in a number of the courses observed (e.g., C-23 to C-27). This variation in provision is illustrated in figure 2.

### **Facilitating professional learning**

Field notes suggested that tutors' practices differed not only in the selection of the learning activities but also in the ways in which tutors facilitated participant engagement. Examples of pedagogical strategies identified to facilitate professional learning included tutors clearly demonstrating examples of inclusive teaching (n=15), articulating the thoughts and reasons that underpinned activities demonstrated (n=10), making suggestions to allow participants to see other possibilities in the activity they created (n=3), responding and addressing participants' questions and misconceptions (n=5), and asking participants questions that encouraged them to explain and justify the decisions made (n=4). When facilitated skilfully (e.g. C-11, C-13), discussions were linked effectively to the practical or theoretical aspect of the workshop, to the participants' practices, and to a shared vision about outstanding PE; with these opportunities adding an important dimension to the whole experience.

567           An illustrative example was evident in course 11 where the tutor asked  
568 participants to consider ways to include pupils with Special Educational Needs and  
569 Disabilities (SEND) in competitive games activities. The extract below illustrates how this  
570 tutor used questions to encourage participants to consider potential barriers to  
571 participation, discuss alternative possibilities, and to justify their thinking and decision  
572 making:

573           Tutor: How can you include SEND participants in invasion games?  
574           *Participants share ideas – they build upon each others' suggestions*

575           Tutor: But what can you do to ensure that this disabled child gets the  
576 touches....? How can you ensure that this child is truly included and not in  
577 the periphery of the game? *Participants hesitate. Two primary teachers*  
578 *offer some suggestions about zone play and change of rules.*

579           Tutor: How do you adapt that? *Two participants draw upon the STEP<sup>8</sup> tool*  
580 *previously discussed to make adaptations using space and people.*

581           Tutor: Which approach is best in that case and why? *One participant offers*  
582 *his rationale.*

583           Tutor: But then, what can you do to ensure that this student (SEND) is  
584 safe?

585           However, in many other courses observed (with the exception of courses 4, 11, 18 and  
586 21), field notes suggest that questions were employed as a means to either check

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<sup>8</sup> All pupils can be included and challenged to progress in their learning if and when their teachers differentiate activities by Space, Task, Equipment or People (STEP)

participants' understandings or monitor how the delivery was going as opposed to incorporating questions for their value as a pedagogical tool.

Equally, only a few tutors encouraged participants to elaborate on their responses or to explain the rationale that underpinned their modifications (e.g., how and why activities were modified, to what end and for whom) (n=5). Whilst most tutors asked participants to share their ideas with the whole group following group tasks (enhancing opportunities for ideas dissemination between participants) (e.g., C21-15), only a small number commented on participants' suggestions and thoughts (n=3, e.g., C-21). In most of these cases, tutors' comments involved praise ('well done; that is a very good practical illustration', C-26) or merely the reiteration of key points raised by participants' responses. Crucially, there was little scrutiny of the quality, effectiveness and application of the 'end product' (the outcome of group activities), as explained in the extract from the observer's field notes below:

*When asked to share their activities with the other groups, no discussion on how (and why) they adapted and what worked and did not work occurred at the end of the session. Despite approaching me earlier raising concerns about the uninspired activities developed by participants, and the lack of innovation in their thinking around inclusion, the tutor neither provided feedback about the ways participants modified activities (and how it could be improved or applied), nor raised questions to make participants think critically about the effectiveness of their ideas (fieldnotes, C-18).*

## Discussion

This paper set out to examine CPD tutors' perceptions and practices in the context of a 'traditional' day-long course. By exploring tutors' perceptions on effective delivery and by observing them in action, a number of pedagogical strategies reflecting the international CPD literature were identified but also areas for consideration were raised.

Most tutors had strong views about the importance of embedding a practical element in the courses they delivered, encouraging participants to experiment with and share their ideas. This is not a surprising finding as it reflects an accumulative body of CPD knowledge (e.g., Desimore, 2009; Day, 2015). Data from the observations though suggest variation in the ways tutors structured, supported, and facilitated professional learning. This variation was evident not only in the actual time dedicated to practical vs. theoretical activities and active vs. passive learning opportunities but also in the quality of implementation (i.e., tutors' ability to facilitate professional learning). The variation identified was perhaps anticipated given the large number of tutors involved. Yet, given the limited evidence of pedagogical and content adaptations in the courses in order to address the needs of the participants, this finding draws attention to the important issue of the selection and continuing education of tutors.

CPD research suggests that effective professional learning requires some 'disequilibrium' as participants' existing theories, beliefs and practices are challenged in a non-threatening way (Higgins et al., 2016). It is argued that activities that foster participants to debate ideas, discuss and rationalise pedagogical decisions, and to draw upon and question existing practices are grounded in and aligned with constructivist understandings of professional learning (Reich, Rooney and Boud, 2015). Although one could contest that the duration of the course posed significant limits to what was feasible,

it was nonetheless evident that a small number of tutors offered such learning opportunities and attempted to tailor provision. Most tutors however appeared to lack the conceptual and practical tools to engage in the process effectively. This finding suggests that there is a significant set of skills involved in supporting, nurturing, and challenging professional learning in CPD contexts. It is therefore important to consider how tutors can be best supported to develop and implement these skills effectively.

When preparing a large number of tutors to deliver a CPD programme, setting clear expectations about the features of effective implementation is an important first step. In the context of the programme evaluated, there was a consistent effort to do this through tutor development days and the provision of detailed course material. However, evidence suggested that the importance of practical activities was not embedded in all courses observed despite consensus amongst tutors about the importance of experiential learning. Furthermore, it appeared that tutors needed further support in developing an in-depth understanding of the multi-layered and complex nature of effective facilitation. More specifically, it is proposed that tutors needed opportunities to closely examine their own practice and assumptions about effective facilitation, consider more deeply what their understanding of active construction of knowledge and sharing of expertise involved, and to reflect upon and question the extent to which they provided high quality theoretical or practical experiences and facilitated professional learning in meaningful ways.

CPD research suggests that to transform practice in a way that benefits pupils, CPD providers need to ensure that participants have ample opportunities to explore different teaching approaches in a critical way and analyse them in light of their own,



‘ongoing’ and sometimes embedded ‘systems of practice’ (Kennedy, 2016). Such critical engagement was nevertheless absent from most courses observed. It is therefore recommended that at a practical level and in the context of this and similar programmes, tutors need support in developing their understanding of how (and when) to: (i) take a step back, be observant and listen to participants’ experiences and questions; (ii) make effective pedagogical interventions to challenge participants’ perceptions and existing practices; (iii) offer ‘vivid portraits of alternative models of teaching’ (Kennedy, 1998, 3); and (iv) support participants to not only *experiment* with different ideas/strategies but also *articulate* their understandings (Michael, 2006), *evaluate* (scrutinise) their ideas, and *synthesise* new with existing understandings.

Meaningful engagement and learning can also be achieved by ensuring that learning activities are rooted in evidence of what and how professionals do (Boud and Hager, 2012) so that existing beliefs and practices are shared, articulated, discussed, reflected upon, compared to the new professional learning, and – when required – problematized and reviewed (Timperley et al., 2007). Locating participants’ needs and questions centre stage also requires a shift in the ways tutors structure the learning environment and highlights the importance of demonstrating the ability to adapt – rather than standardise - CPD content.

## Conclusion

The research community is under considerable pressure to improve the precision of studies on the effects of CPD (Day, 2015) in order to offer trustworthy and clear evaluations for its the benefit to policy makers and practitioners. There are many ways to

do so. The present study focused on CPD input, namely what happens during the CPD programme, and examined tutors' perceptions and practices in the context of a short course. The results consolidate existing understandings about the perceived importance of (inter)active and practical learning opportunities in CPD; but also add nuance and detail on the diverse ways in which tutors engaged participants in the learning process.

The results suggest that effective tutoring is a dynamic, complex and multi-dimensional process. Providing a blueprint with a set of fixed skills and knowledge that tutors should display or develop in order to be effective in their delivery might be restrictive and certainly not sufficient in the long term. Rather, it is important that those responsible for the education of CPD providers offer meaningful and sustained support so that tutors develop a nuanced and critical understanding of the relevant literature and their own practices.

In the context of the teacher effectiveness literature, the use of lesson observations to evaluate the quality of teaching is growing in popularity (Mashburn et al., 2014) and this body of literature has an important role to play in delineating the aspects of teaching associated with student learning and achievement. It is argued here that pursuing a similar line of inquiry in CPD research and understanding how tutors facilitate effective professional learning is important for at least two reasons. First, this type of evidence can be used diagnostically (Grossman et al., 2013) informing and shaping the way tutors are educated to support professional learning in effective, tailored and innovative ways. Second, making tutors' practices more visible can provide the basis for examining the effects of different approaches to tutoring on both teacher and pupil learning outcomes. In this context, the observation tool used in this study needs to be

developed further and applied in different contexts and to different programmes so that fruitful comparisons can be made to contribute to the existing knowledge base about the specific aspects of CPD implementation that lead to programme success.

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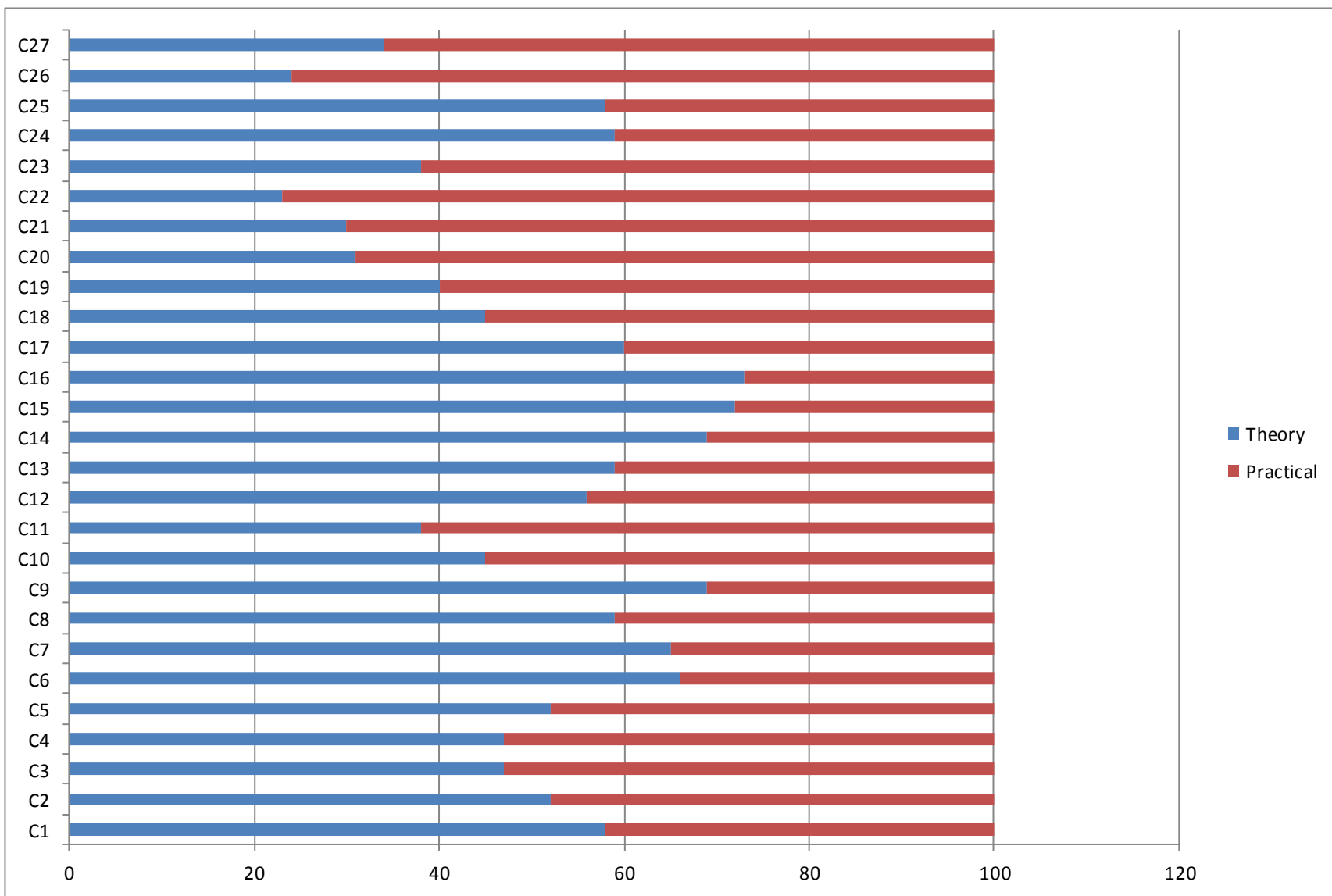
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**Figure 1** (overleaf): % Time dedicated to 'Theory' vs. 'Practical experiences' per course (courses 1-6 were delivered in 2013, courses 7-16 in 2014 and 17-27 in 2015)





824 Table 1: % Time dedicated to ‘Passive’ vs. ‘Active’ learning experiences per course

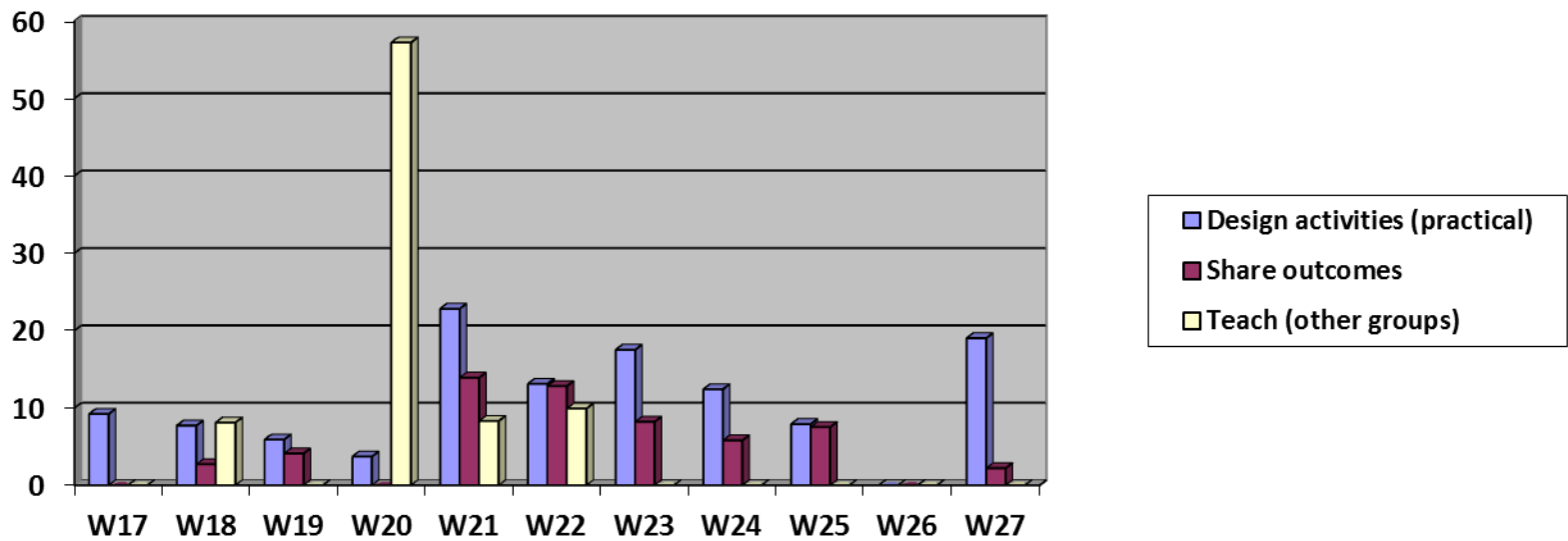
2013	C-1		C-2		C-3		C-4		C-5		C-6	
%	Passive 60	Active 40	Passive 55	Active 45	Passive 60	Active 40	Passive 64	Active 36	Passive 95	Active 5	Passive 90	Active 10
2014	C-7		C-8		C-9		C-10		C-11		C-12	
%	Passive 55	Active 45	Passive 65	Active 35	Passive 72	Active 28	Passive 54	Active 46	Passive 36	Active 64	Passive 70	Active 30
	C-13		C-14		C-15		C-16					
%	Passive 50	Active 50	Passive 75	Active 25	Passive 55	Active 45	Passive 64	Active 36				
2015	C-17		C-18		C-19		C-20		C-21		C-22	
%	Passive 70	Active 30	Passive 49	Active 51	Passive 68	Active 32	Passive 35	Active 65	Passive 20	Active 80	Passive 35	Active 65
	C-23		C-24		C-25		C-26		C-27			
%	Passive 60	Active 40	Passive 54	Active 46	Passive 65	Active 35	Passive 94	Active 6	Passive 61	Active 39		

825

826

827 **Figure 2:** Variation between workshops in terms of the percentage of time allocated to designing activities in practical settings  
828 (including developing and modifying activities and working on the scenarios), share outcomes (explain verbally what they've done or  
829 through demonstrations) and teach other groups of participants or pupils.

830



831

832

833